

Ashley Teoh  
Language Arts Assignment  
This I Believe- Patchwork 3

I did not expect anything more than to flip people off my shoulders and pin them down on the ground when I first joined judo, but this sport gave me so much more than I bargained for- not only did it give me physical strength and power, it gave me the mental capacity to fight until the end.

It was the day on semi-finals of the National Judo Championships. Minutes before the fight, I warmed up, simultaneously scanning the area in search for my opponent-to-be. Across the dojo, I caught sight of a girl jumping on the spot rhythmically, swinging her arms to and fro, her face cold and composed. As though she could sense me, or perhaps smell the taste of her prey, her neck snapped up, jerking me backwards. For a second our eyes locked, and I remember swearing that if looks could kill, I would be dead by then. I quickly tore my eyes away from her glare, cursing inwardly. She was huge, almost twice my size. To make things worse, she was an orange-belt, a senior, which meant that she was probably more experienced in judo than me. The more I thought about her glaring eyes, her bulging muscles, her deathly look, the more my fingers trembled, my palms sweated, my heart pounded.

A nudge. "Psst. I think she might be an 80."

My eyes widened in horror.

"But don't be afraid. Remember, strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."

Funny, I remember Gandhi saying the same thing.

The next thing I knew, I was in the dojo, looking up at my predator who was towering above me- the person who was going to determine if I ever walked out of this competition alive. She snarled; I gulped, my knees knocking against each other.

"Hajime." *Begin.*

The minute she grabbed my lapels, her strength inundated me and I no longer had control of my body. She tugged me in all directions; dragging me all around the dojo. I was at her mercy, and it was just a matter of time that I got thrown down the floor.

She tightened her clench on my back and yanked me closer to her. Suddenly, our faces were inches apart- I could smell the stench of the dehydrated breath and feel the heat radiating off her sweaty body.

"Giving up so soon?" She hissed into my ears, her voice dangerously low.

My heart missed a beat.

Give up?

After surviving years of tough trainings, rain or shine, that made our muscles ache of pain, our mouths burn of thirst, and our bodies drenched in sweat, who said anything about giving up?

Her words sparked a fire within me- I was determined to prove her wrong, to show her what judo had trained me to be. So with every drop of fight I had in me, I heaved her off my shoulders and flung her onto the ground- she fell with a muffled groan.

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“Ippon!”

Victory! Beaming with pride and glory, I rose and turned to face the people who stood by me through the times of tribulations. In the end, the win was not all that mattered, because along this journey, friendships were forged by the undivided fervor of judo. And with every pummel, thrust and slam endured, I have gotten stronger- and this made me believe.